

Nagasaki Peace Declaration

“What can people possibly be thinking?”

At the close of the 61st year following the atomic bombings, voices of anger and frustration are echoing throughout the city of Nagasaki.

At 11:02 a.m. on August 9, 1945, a single atomic bomb destroyed our city, instantly claiming the lives of 74,000 people and injuring 75,000 more. People were burned by the intense heat rays and flung through the air by the horrific blast winds. Their bodies bathed in mordant radiation, many of the survivors continue to suffer from the after-effects even today. How can we ever forget the anguished cries of those whose lives and dreams were so cruelly taken from them?

And yet, some 30,000 nuclear weapons stand ready nonetheless to annihilate humanity.

A decade ago, the International Court of Justice stated that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law, strongly encouraging international society to strive for the elimination of nuclear armaments. Six years ago at the United Nations, the nuclear weapon states committed themselves not merely to prevent proliferation, but to an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

Nuclear weapons are instruments of indiscriminate genocide, and their elimination is a task that mankind must realize without fail.

Last year, the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to which 189 countries are signatories, ended without result, and no progress has been observed since.

The nuclear weapon states have not demonstrated sincerity in their efforts at disarmament; the United States of America in particular has issued tacit approval of nuclear weapons development by India, and is moving forward with the construction of cooperative arrangements for nuclear technology. At the same time, nuclear weapon declarant North Korea is threatening the peace and security of Japan and the world as a whole. In fact, the very structure of non-proliferation is facing a crisis due to nuclear ambitions by various nations including Pakistan, which has announced its possession of nuclear arms; Israel, which is widely considered to possess them; and Iran.

The time has come for those nations that rely on the force of nuclear armaments to respectfully heed the voices of peace-loving people, not least the atomic bomb survivors, to strive in good faith for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and to advance towards the complete abolishment of all such weapons.

It must also be said that nuclear weapons cannot be developed without the cooperation of scientists. We would urge scientists to realize their responsibility for the destiny of all mankind, not just for their own particular countries, and to abandon the development of nuclear arms.

Once again we call upon the Japanese government, representing as it does a nation that has experienced nuclear devastation firsthand, to ground itself in reflection upon history, uphold the peaceful intentions of the constitution, enact into the law the three non-nuclear principles, and work for establishment of a Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, that the tragedy of war may not occur again. We also urge the Japanese government to provide greater assistance to aging atomic bomb survivors, both within Japan and overseas.

For 61 years, the *hibakusha* atomic bomb survivors have recounted their tragic experiences to succeeding generations. Many have chosen not to hide the keloid scars on their skin, continuing to tell of things that they might rather not remember. Their efforts are indeed a starting point for peace. Their voices reverberate around the world, calling for the deepest compassion of those who are working to ensure that Nagasaki is the last place on our planet to have suffered nuclear destruction.

The 3rd Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons will be held in October of this year. We invite people working for peace to span generations and national boundaries, and gather together to communicate. Let us firmly join hands and foster an even stronger network for nuclear abolition and peace, extending from Nagasaki throughout the world.

We remain confident that the empathy and solidarity of all those who inherit the hopes of the *hibakusha* atomic bomb survivors will become an even more potent force, one that will surely serve to realize a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons.

In closing, we pray for the undisturbed repose of the souls of those who lost their lives in such misery, we resolve that 2006 should be a new year of departure, and we proclaim our commitment to continue to strive for the establishment of lasting world peace.

Ichho Itoh
Mayor of Nagasaki
August 9, 2006